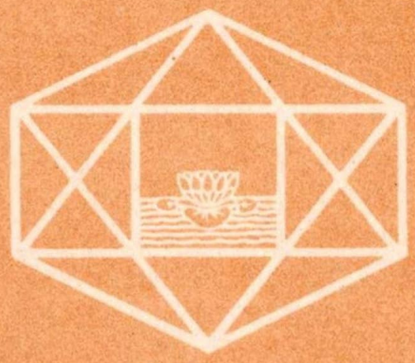
APRIL 1977

ALL INDIA MAGAZINE



SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY
PONDICHERRY

AIM

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VOL. VI NO. 9 APRIL 1977

—Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.

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February 21, 1978 is the Mother's Birth Centenary Day. How shall we prepare ourselves for this Hour of God? Sri Aurobindo has said, "In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it."

AIM presents special text during this year befitting this theme. Our mantra for every moment is "Remember and Offer".

Knowledge and Practice

This evening I am going to read to you a short story which seemed quite instructive to me. It is a tale of ancient times, of what used to happen before there were printing presses and books, of the days when only the Guru or the Initiate had the knowledge and gave it only to those he considered worthy of having it. And for him, usually, "to be worthy of having it" meant *putting into practice* what one had learnt. He gave you a truth and expected you to practise it. And when you had put it into practice, he consented to give you another.

Now things happen quite differently. Everybody and anybody can have a book, read it right through and he is quite free to practise it or not as he pleases. This is all very well, but it creates a certain confusion in many minds, and people who have read many books think that it is enough and that all sorts of miraculous things must happen to them because they have read books, and that they don't need to take the trouble of practising. So they become impatient and say, "How is it that although I have read all this I am still just the same person, have the same difficulties, haven't achieved any realisation ?" I very often hear remarks of this kind.

They forget only one thing, that they have obtained the knowledge — intellectual, mental knowledge — before

having deserved it, that is, before having put into practice what they have read, and that, naturally, there is discrepancy between their state of consciousness and the ideas, the knowledge they can speak about at length but which they haven't practised.

So it is for the impatient ones that I am going to read this story, to tell you how things happened in the days of old when one couldn't simply have a book and read it, when one depended on the Guru or the Initiate to obtain the knowledge which he alone had; he had received it from another Guru, another Initiate, and he transmitted it to you when he pleased, that is, when he found you worthy of having it.

So here's my story (*Mother reads*):

A Story of Initiation
(*Translated from the Gujarati*)

Once upon a time there was a Mahatma who was a great ascetic and a great pandit. He was honoured by all, full of years and wisdom. His name was Junun. Many young boys, many young men used to come to him to receive initiation. They stayed in his hermitage, became pandits themselves, then returned home after a long and studious retreat.

One day a young man came to him. His name was Yusuf Hussein. The Mahatma agreed to let him stay with him without even asking who he was. Four years went by, thus, until one morning Junun sent for Yusuf and, for the first time, questioned him: "Why have you come here ?" Without a second thought Yusuf answered: "To receive religious initiation." Junun said nothing. He

called a servant and asked him, "Have you prepared the box as I asked you ?"

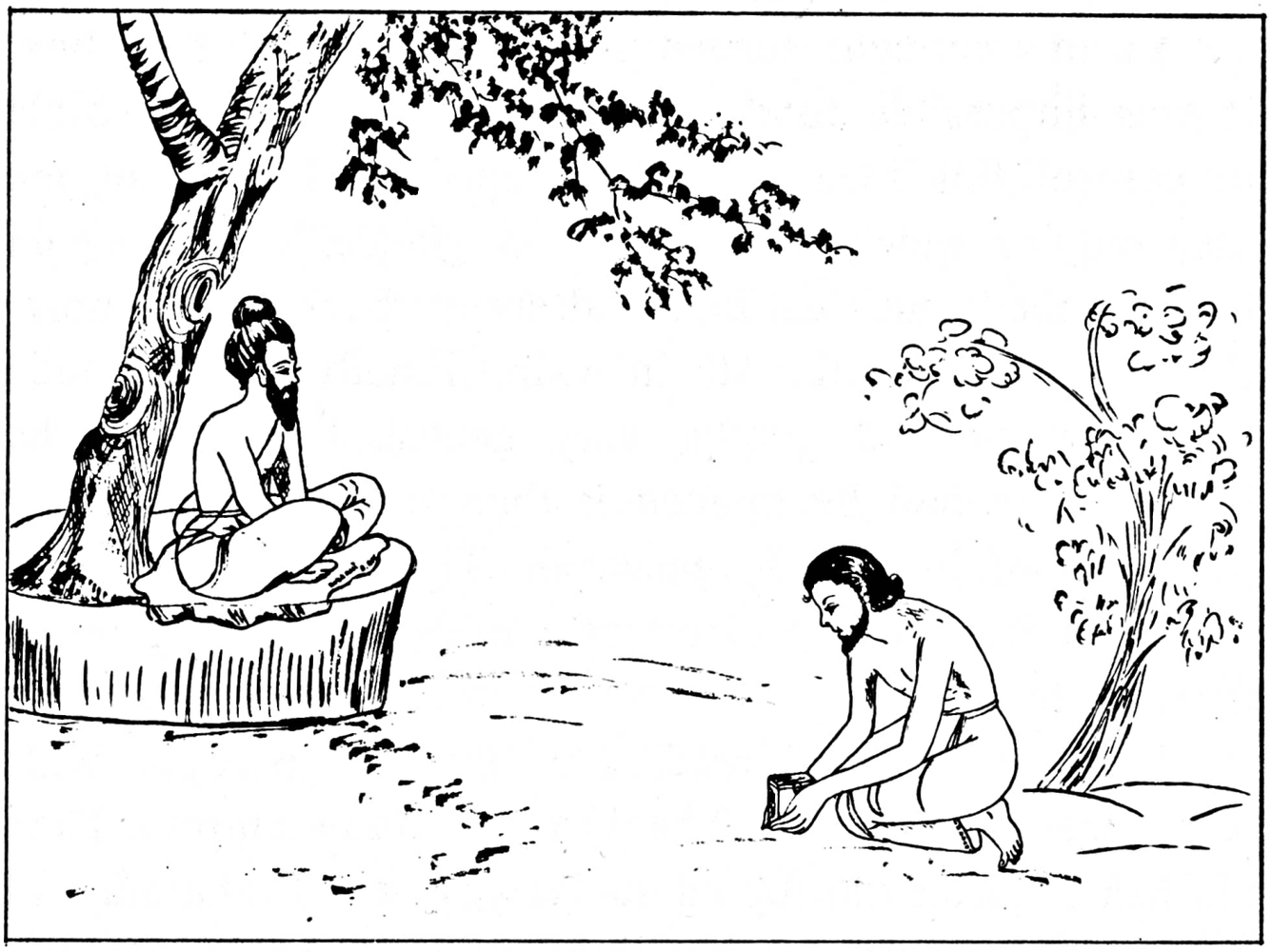
"Yes, Master, it is there, quite ready."

"Bring it without further delay," said Junun.

With great care the servant placed the box before the Mahatma. He took it and gave it to Yusuf: "I have a friend who lives there on the banks of the river Neela. Go and take this box to him from me. But take good care, brother, don't make any mistake on the way. Keep this box carefully with you and give it to the man whom it is for. When you come back I shall give you initiation." Once again the Mahatma repeated his advice and described the route Yusuf had to follow to reach the river Neela. Yusuf bowed down at his guru's feet, took the box and started on his way.

The retreat where the Mahatma's friend lived was quite far away and in those days there were no cars or railways. So Yusuf walked. He walked the whole morning, then came the afternoon. The heat was intense and radiated everywhere. He felt tired. So he sat down in the shade of an old tree by the roadside to rest a little. The box was very small. It was not locked. Besides, Yusuf had not even paid attention to it. His Guru had told him to carry a box, and he had started off without another word.

But now, during the afternoon rest, Yusuf began to think. His mind was free to wander with nothing to occupy it.... It would be very rare indeed if on such occasions some foolish idea did not cross the mind.... Thus his eyes fell on the box. He began to look at it. A pretty little box !... Why, it does not seem



to be locked.... And how light it is ! Is it possible that there is anything inside ? So light.... Perhaps it is empty ?" Yusuf stretched out his hand as though to open it. Suddenly he thought better of it: "But no.... Full or empty, whatever is in this box is not my concern. My guru asked me to deliver it to his friend, nothing more. And that's all that concerns me. I should not care about anything else."

For some time Yusuf sat quietly. But his mind would not remain quiet. The box was still there before his eyes. A pretty little box. "It seems quite empty," he thought, "what harm would there be in opening an empty box ?... If it had been locked I would understand, that would be bad.... A box which is not even locked, it can't be very serious. I'll just open it for

a moment and then shut it again."

Yusuf's thought turned round and round that box. It was impossible to detach himself from it, impossible to control this idea that had crept into him. "Let me see, only a quick glance, just a glance." Once again he stretched out his hand, drew it back once more, then again sat still. All in vain. Finally Yusuf made up his mind and gently, very gently, he opened the box. Hardly had he opened it than pfft ! a little mouse jumped out... and disappeared. The poor mouse all stifled in its box did not waste a second in leaping to freedom !

Yusuf was bewildered. He opened his eyes wide and gazed and gazed. The box lay there empty. Then his heart started throbbing sadly: "So, the Mahatma had sent only a mouse, a tiny little mouse... and I couldn't even carry it safe and sound to the end. Indeed I have committed a serious fault. What shall I do now ?"

Yusuf was full of regrets. But there was nothing more to do now. In vain he went round the tree, in vain he looked up and down the road. The little mouse had actually fled.... With a trembling hand Yusuf closed the lid and in dismay resumed his journey.

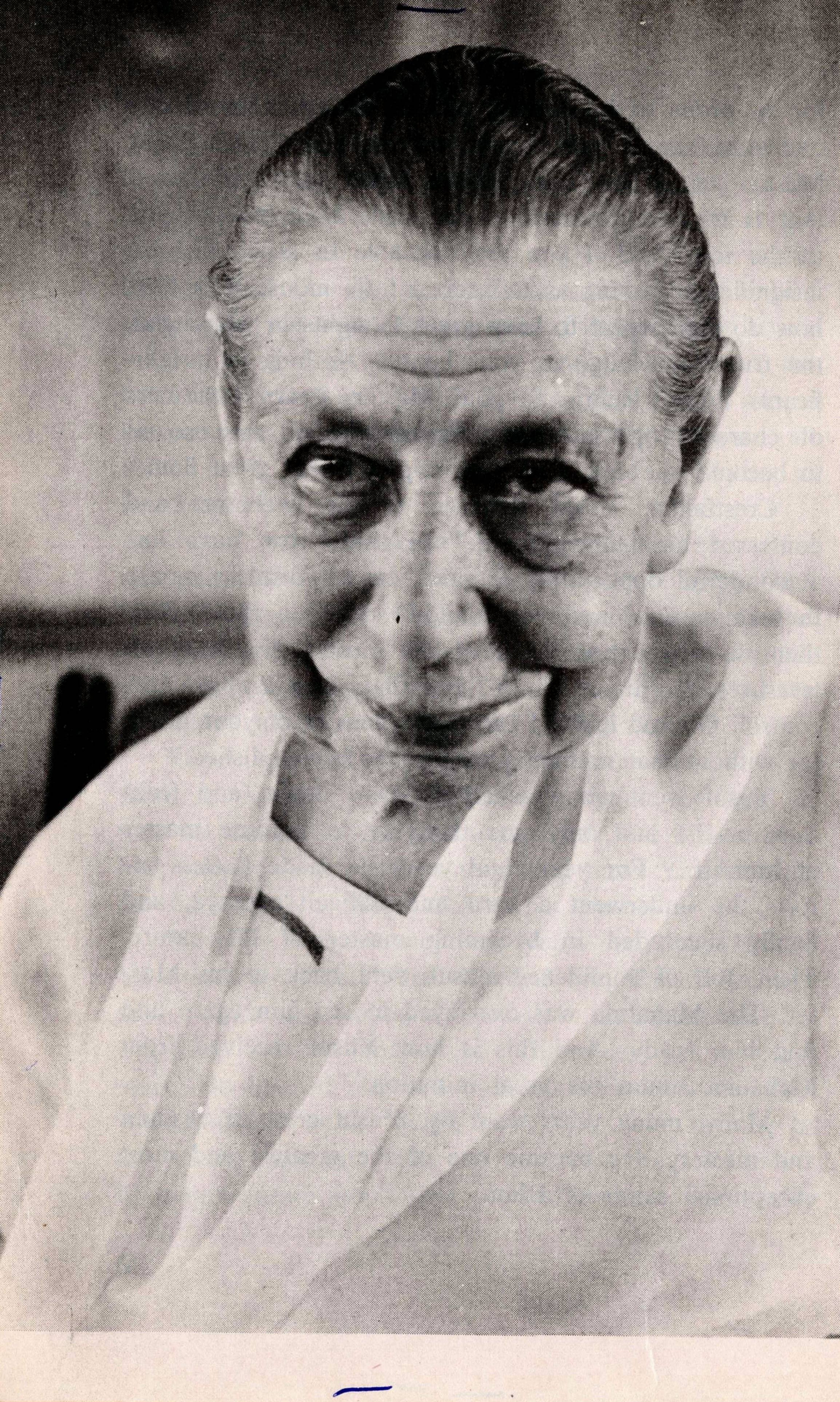
When he reached the river Neela and the house of his master's friend, Yusuf handed the Mahatma's present to him and waited silently in a corner because of the fault he had committed. This man was a great saint. He opened the box and immediately understood what had happened. "Well, Yusuf," he said, turning to the young aspirant, "So you have lost that mouse.... Mahatma Junun won't give you initiation, I am afraid,

for in order to be worthy of the supreme Knowledge one must have a perfect mastery over one's mind. Your Master clearly had some doubts about your will-power, that is why he resorted to this little trick, to put you to the test. And if you are not able to accomplish so insignificant a thing as to keep a little mouse in a box, how do you expect to keep great thoughts in your head, the true Knowledge in your heart? Nothing is insignificant, Yusuf. Return to your Master. Learn steadiness of character, perseverance. Be worthy of trust so as to become one day the true disciple of that great Soul."

Crestfallen, Yusuf returned to the Mahatma and confessed his fault. "Yusuf," he said, "you have lost a wonderful opportunity. I gave you a worthless mouse to take care of and you couldn't do even that! How then do you expect to keep the most precious of all treasures, the divine Truth? For that you must have self-control. Go and learn. Learn to be master of your mind, for without that nothing great can be accomplished."

Yusuf went away ashamed, head down, and from then on he had only one thought: to become master of himself.... For years and years he made tireless efforts, he underwent a hard and difficult tapasya, and finally succeeded in becoming master of his nature. Then, full of confidence Yusuf went back to his Master. The Mahatma was overjoyed to see him again and find him ready. And this is how Yusuf received from Mahatma Junun the great initiation.

Many, many years went by, Yusuf grew in wisdom and mastery. He became one of the greatest and most exceptional saints of Islam.



(*Mother speaks to the children*) So, this is to tell you that you must not be impatient, that you must understand that in order to really possess knowledge, whatever it may be, you must put it into practice, that is, master your nature so as to be able to express this knowledge in action.

All of you who have come here have been told many things; you have been put into contact with a world of truth, you live within it, the air you breathe is full of it; and yet how few of you know that these truths are valuable only if they are put into practice, and that it is useless to talk of consciousness, knowledge, equality of soul, universality, infinity, eternity, supreme truth, the divine presence and... of all sorts of things like that, if you make no effort yourselves to *live* these things and feel them concretely within you. And don't tell yourselves, "Oh, I have been here so many years! Oh, I would very much like to have the result of my efforts!" You must know that very persistent efforts, a very steadfast endurance are necessary to master the least weakness, the least pettiness, the least meanness in one's nature. What is the use of talking about divine Love if one can't love without egoism? What is the use of talking about immortality if one is stubbornly attached to the past and the present and if one doesn't want to give anything in order to receive everything?

You are still very young, but you must learn *right away* that to reach the goal you must know how to pay the price, and that to understand the supreme truths you must put them into practice in your daily life.

22. 3. 1957 THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers, 1957-58*)

Psychic New Birth

The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature. One may practise yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conqer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done. In this yoga the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the supramental cannot find a sufficient base in a spiritualised mind alone. If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible.... If there is a refusal of the psychic new birth, a refusal to become the child new born from the Mother, owing to attachment to intellectual knowledge or mental ideas or to some vital desire, then there will be a failure in the sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, Cent. ed. vol. 24, pp. 1095-96)

Examinations for the Sadhaks

The integral yoga is constituted of an uninterrupted series of examinations which one must pass without being warned about them beforehand — which puts you under the obligation of being always vigilant and attentive.

Three groups of examiners sets these tests. Apparently they have nothing to do with one another and their procedures are so different, at times even they seem so contradictory that they do not appear to be able to move towards the same end, and yet they complete one another, they collaborate for the same purpose and are indispensable to the integrality of the result.

These three categories of examinations are those set by the forces of Nature, those set by the spiritual and divine forces, and those set by the hostile forces. These latter are the most deceptive in their appearance and in order not to be taken by surprise, unprepared, demands a constant state of vigilance, sincerity and humility.

The most banal circumstances, the events of everyday life, people, things, — apparently the most insignificant, all belong to one or other of these three categories of examiners. In this great and complex organisation

of tests it is the events usually considered the most important in life which constitute the examinations easiest to pass for they find you on your guard and prepared. One stumbles more easily on the little pebbles on the road because they do not draw attention.

Endurance and plasticity, cheerfulness and intrepidity are the qualities more specially required for the examinations of physical Nature.

Aspiration, confidence, idealism, enthusiasm and generosity in self-giving for the spiritual examinations.

Vigilance, sincerity and humility for the examinations set by the adverse forces.

And do not think that on one side there are those who pass exams and on the other those who set them. At the same time, according to the circumstances and moments, one is both examiner and examinee and it may even happen that one is simultaneously, all at once, examined and examiner. And the profit drawn from this depends upon the quality and degree of intensity in one's aspiration and the awakening of one's consciousness.

And, finally, a last recommendation, never pose as an examiner. For, whilst it is very well to remember constantly that one is perhaps fairly in the course of passing a very important exam, it is on the contrary extremely dangerous to think oneself appointed to set tests for others, for this is opening the door to the most ridiculous and disastrous vanities.

THE MOTHER

(*Champaklal's Treasures*, pp. 106-107)

A COMPASS ON THE WAY

Q: I aspire to live the yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the life divine. But I feel that I am in a virgin forest in which I have lost the sense of direction. Where exactly am I?

I would like to have an indication, a way to come out of it and reach the right path, the path that leads to the Divine.

Generally, the starting point should be an experience, however small, which serves as a compass on the way and one refers to it to be sure not to go astray, until one is ready for another more important and conclusive experience.

The real landmarks on the way are the spontaneous experiences, not those which come from a mental formation and are always unreliable.

The experience must come *first* and the explanation afterwards. That is why Sri Aurobindo has said: never distrust your experience*; but you can distrust your explanation, which is a mental activity.

It is very important to note one's experiences and to remember them. To build a system of development is secondary and sometimes harmful.

17-3-1965

THE MOTHER

(*Bulletin*, Feb. 1975, pp. 39-41)

* Aphorism No. 96: Experience in thy soul the truth of the Scripture; afterwards, if thou wilt, reason and state thy experience intellectually and even then distrust thy statement, but distrust never thy experience.

Surrender and Insincerity

Q: For self-surrender, should one continue to do what one ought to do?

Continue to do what one *ought* to, what is clearly shown as the thing that ought to be done, what is to be done — whether one succeeds or does not succeed, whether the result is what one thinks or expects or isn't — that has no importance; one continues.

Q: But when one tries, if one makes a mistake unconsciously, how can one know?

If you are quite sincere, you know. Not to know one's fault is always the sign of an insincerity somewhere. And generally, it is hidden in the vital. When the vital consents to collaborate (which is already a big step), when it decides that it too is going to work, to devote all its effort and all its energy to accomplish the work, even then there is underneath, well hidden somewhere, a sort of — how shall we call it? — an expectation that things will turn out well and the result will be favourable. And that veils the complete sincer-

ity. For this expectation is an egoistic, personal thing, and this veils the full sincerity. Then you do not know.

But if one is altogether, absolutely sincere, as soon as what one is doing is not exactly what should be done, one feels it clearly — not violently but very clearly, very precisely: "No, not this." And then if one has no attachment, immediately it stops, instantaneously it stops.

Only one has attachment, even for a disinterested work. That's what you must understand. You have given your life for a cause that is not egoistic, but the ego is there all the same. And you have a way of doing the thing which is special, personal to you; and you have within you a hope (not to speak of a desire) that the result will be like this, that you will get this and it will be done. Even a work that is not done for yourself but which you have undertaken, you expect that it will succeed, that you will have success — not personally — for the thing you have undertaken, the work that you are doing. Well, that brings in just a little bit of something like that, down below, quite hidden, quite a tiny thing which is a little... not very straight, a little bent, twisted. And then you do not know. But if that were not there, as soon as you failed to do exactly what should be done, you would know. You would know it absolutely precisely. It is as delicate a movement as the thousandth part of a millimetre would be. Yes, it is there, and that is sufficient, you know: "I was mistaken." But you must have that absolute sincerity which precisely does not want at any cost to blunder, which will do anything, give up every-

thing, everything, rather than live in any kind of illusion. But it is very difficult; it takes time and much labour. When you are doing a thing, always those two, the mind and the vital are there, trying to draw some benefit or other out of what you are doing: the benefit of personal satisfaction, the benefit of happiness, the benefit of a good opinion that you have of yourself. It is difficult not to deceive oneself.

20. 5. 1953 THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers — 1953*, pp. 54-56)

These are the conditions of the Light and Truth, the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend ...

—There must be a total and sincere surrender;

—there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power;

—there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

Sattwic Food

I think the importance of sattwic food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene, and many of the sanctions and prohibitions laid down in ancient religions had more a hygienic than a spiritual motive. The Gita's definitions seem to point in the same direction — tamasic food, it seems to say, is what is stale or rotten with the virtue gone out of it, rajasic food is that which is too acrid, pungent, etc., heats the blood and spoils the health, sattwic food is what is pleasing, healthy, etc. It may well be that different kinds of food nourish the action of the different gunas and so indirectly are helpful or harmful apart from their physical action. But that is as far as one can go confidently. What particular eatables are or are not sattwic is another question and more difficult to determine. Spiritually, I should say that the effect of food depends more on the occult atmosphere and influences that come with it than on anything in the food itself. Vegetarianism is another question altogether; it stands, as you say, on a will not to do harm to the more conscious forms of life for the satisfaction of the belly.

As for the question of practising to take all kinds of food with equal *rasa*, it is not necessary to practise nor does it really come by practice. One has to acquire equality within in the consciousness and as this equality grows, one can extend it or apply it to the various fields of the activity of the consciousness.

* *

Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you; then it need not create *tamas*.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, Cent. ed. vol. 24, pp. 1473-74, 1466)

An Advice for Parents

Q: What are the causes for not being able to meditate?

Because one has not learnt to do it.

Why, suddenly you take a fancy: today I am going to meditate. You have never done so before. You sit down and imagine you are going to begin meditating. But it is something to learn as one learns mathematics or the piano. It is not learnt just like that! It is not enough to sit crossed arms and crossed legs in order to meditate. You must learn how to meditate. Everywhere all kinds of rules have been given about what should be done in order to be able to meditate.

If, when one was quite young and was taught, for instance, how to squat, if one was taught at the same time not to think or to remain very quiet or to concentrate or gather one's thoughts, or... all sorts of things one must learn to do, like meditating; if, when quite young and at the same time that you were taught to stand straight, for instance, and walk or sit or even eat (you are taught many things but you are not aware

of this, for they are taught when you are very small), if you were taught to meditate also, then spontaneously, later, you could, the day you decide to do so, sit down and meditate. But you are not taught this. You are not taught anything of the kind, absolutely. Besides, usually, you are taught very few things — you are not taught even to sleep. People think that they have only to lie down in their bed and then they sleep. But this is not true! One must learn how to sleep as one must learn to eat, learn to do anything at all. And if one does not learn, well, one does it badly! Or one takes years and years to learn how to do it, and all those years when it is badly done, all sorts of unpleasant things occur. And it is only after suffering much, being much mistaken, committing many stupidities, that, gradually, when one is old and has white hair, one begins to know how to do something. But if, when you were quite small, your parents or those who look after you, took the trouble to teach you how to do what you do, do it properly as it should be done, in the right way, then that would help you to avoid all — all these mistakes you make through years. And not only do you make mistakes, but nobody tells you these are mistakes! And so you are surprised that you fall ill, are tired, don't know how to do what you want to, and

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Simply the art of keeping one's body in good health, one's mind quiet and goodwill in one's heart,...well I don't think there are many who take care to teach this to their children.

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that you have never been taught. There are children who are not taught anything, and so they need years and years and years to learn the simplest things, even the most elementary thing: to be clean.

It is true that most of the time parents do not teach this, for they do not know it themselves! For they themselves did not have someone to teach them. So they do not know... they have fumbled about all their life to learn how to live. And so naturally they are not in a position to teach you how to live, for they do not know it themselves. If you are left to yourself, you understand, it needs years, years of experiences to learn the simplest thing, and even then you must think about it. If you don't think about it, you will never learn.

To live in the right way is a very difficult art, and unless one begins to learn it when quite young and to make an effort, one never knows it very well. Simply the art of keeping one's body in good health, one's mind quiet and goodwill in one's heart — which things are indispensable in order to live decently (I don't say in comfort, I don't say remarkably, I only say decently), well, I don't think there are many who take care to teach this to their children.

2. 6. 1954 THE MOTHER

(*Bulletin*, Nov. 1975, pp. 79-81)

The self and the Self

It has been well said by one who saw but through a veil and mistook the veil for the face that thy aim is to become thyself; and he said well again that the nature of man is to transcend himself. This is indeed his nature and that is indeed the divine aim of his self-transcending.

What then is the self that thou hast to transcend and what is the Self that thou hast to become? For it is here that thou shouldst make no error; for this error, not to know thyself, is the fountain of all thy grief and the cause of all thy stumbling.

That which thou hast to transcend is the self that thou appearest to be, and that is man as thou knowest him, the apparent Purusha. And what is this man? He is a mental being enslaved to life and matter; and where he is not enslaved to life and matter, he is the slave of his mind. But this is a great and heavy servitude; for to be the slave of mind is to be the slave of the false, the limited and the apparent.

The Self that thou hast to become is that self that thou art within behind the veil of mind and life and

matter. It is to be the spiritual, the divine, the superman, the real Purusha. For that which is above the mental being is the superman. It is to be the master of thy mind, thy life and thy body; it is to be a king over Nature of whom thou art now the tool, lifted above her who now has thee under her feet. It is to be free and not a slave, to be one and not divided, to be immortal and not obscured by death, to be full of light and not darkened, to be full of bliss and not the sport of grief and suffering, to be uplifted into power and not cast down into weakness. It is to live in the Infinite and possess the finite. It is to live in God and be one with him in his being. To become thyself is to be this and all that flows from it.

Be free in thyself, and therefore free in thy mind, free in thy life and thy body. For the Spirit is freedom.

Be one with God and all beings; live in thyself and not in thy little ego. For the Spirit is unity.

Be thyself immortal, and put not thy faith in death; for death is not of thyself, but of thy body. For the Spirit is immortality.

To be immortal is to be infinite in being and consciousness and bliss; for the Spirit is infinite and that which is finite lives only by his infinity.

These things thou art, therefore thou canst become all these; but if thou art not these things, then thou couldst never become them. What is within thee, that alone can be revealed in thy being. Thou appearest

indeed to be other than this, but wherefore shouldst thou enslave thyself to appearances ?

Rather arise, transcend thyself, become thyself.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Hour of God*, Cent. ed. vol. 17, pp. 74-75)

SELF

He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"
Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,
But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."

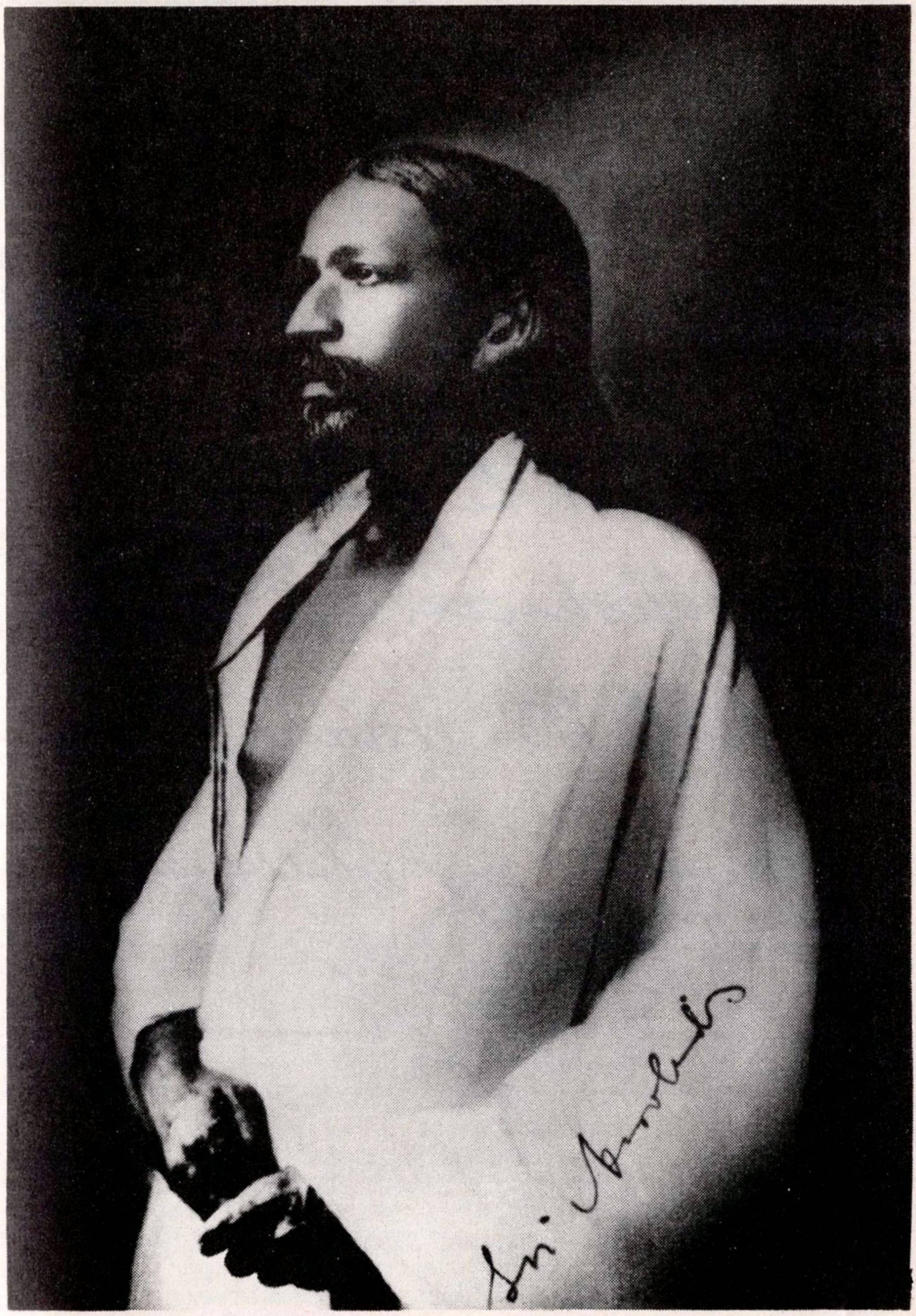
I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.
I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.
I care not what may happen day by day."
I questioned him, "Are you so very sure ?"

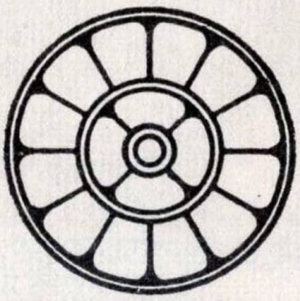
He answered, "I can understand your doubt.
But to be free is all. It does not matter
How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
Making a row over your daily platter.

"To be aware of self is liberty,
Self I have got and, having self, am free."

SRI AUROBINDO

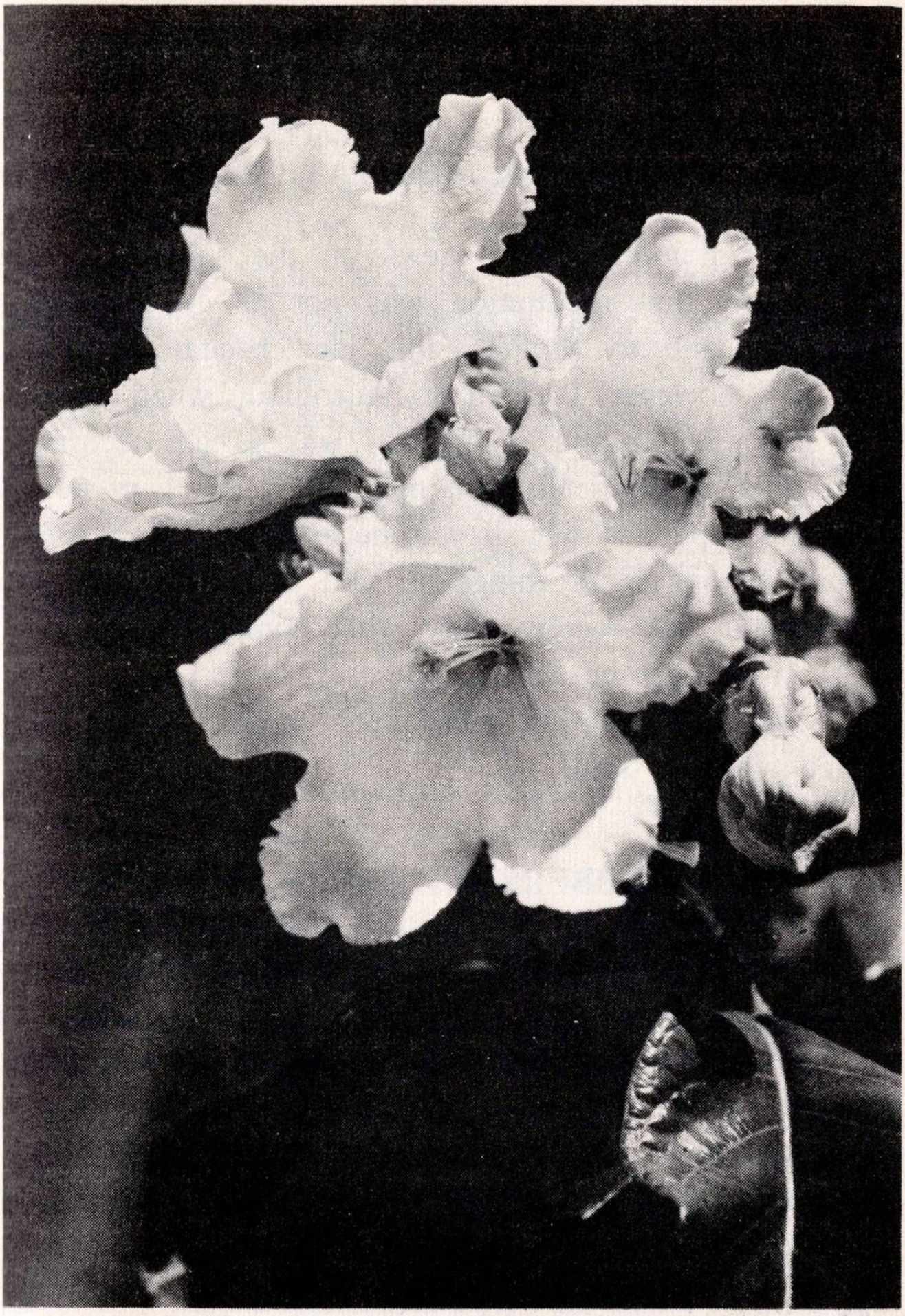
(*Collected Poems*, Cent. ed. vol. 5, p. 151)





We must be free of
all selfishness to serve
properly the Divine Cause
with my blessings

Yours



UNSELFISHNESS

Deeply open so as not to refuse anything.

Botanical name: Beaumontia jerdoniana

Common name: Herald's trumpet

Champaklal's reminiscences

WORK OR MEDITATION?

I was holding strong views on the subject. I had always felt that meditation was not at all necessary. When I came to Mother, this idea became stronger. One day, however, I asked Sri Aurobindo whether work was not enough and meditation was at all necessary. He replied emphatically that meditation was very necessary. He explained why it was necessary to sit in meditation. Among other things he said that when one sits quietly one can receive fully what comes from above. This habit must be formed.

I may add that my subsequent experience has confirmed what he said.

ROBBERS ON THE WAY

I read and liked the following sentence in an article of Maulana Azad:

I know the path, but what can I do if the robbers rob me on the way?

I took it to Mother. She wrote on the back of the slip on which I had copied that sentence:

CALL THE LORD TO CATCH THE ROBBERS.

CHAMPAKLAL

(*Champaklal's Treasures*, pp. 4, 7)